



MICHIGAN SNOWSPORTS INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION

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Testimony for: House Tourism Committee Hearing on SB 619 - funding the Pure Michigan advertising campaign
Date: March 9, 2010
Submitted by: Michele (Mickey) MacWilliams, executive director of the Michigan Snowsports Industries Association

On behalf of the snowsports industry, which includes Michigan's ski areas, ski and snowboard retailers and other related businesses, I ask you to support the Pure Michigan funding package, **with a provision that some of the funds go to promote winter travel.**

We are strong supporters of Travel Michigan and the award-winning Pure Michigan campaign. Last winter (2008/09) Michigan benefited from a one-time, \$1.8-million **winter advertising campaign, the first winter advertising in 15 years.** However, the way things are going now, **that isn't going to happen again.** Because Travel Michigan's fiscal year ends in October, and if our legislators wait until spring to pass funding for each year, winter is over before the funding is approved.

It may surprise you to note that despite our bleak economy, last winter Michigan's ski industry reported only a slight revenue decline of 2.6 percent from its prior season, which was a record year. We were bracing for much worse. I **believe that one of the key reasons for our successful season was the Pure Michigan winter ad campaign.**

In Michigan, travel for winter recreation is a **\$4.4 billion industry that accounts for one third of the state's leisure travel.** Plus, we're an easy – and relatively inexpensive – sell. Of the four states that border us – Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin – when it comes to winter recreation, we're the best game in town. **Michigan has more ski areas than any other state,** which range from Mom & Pop operations to world-class resorts. We have the terrain, the snow and the facilities. We just need invite, and then remind, our neighbors in surrounding states to come enjoy all that Michigan has to offer in the winter.

I live in Clarkston and last month I was at our local ski area, Pine Knob. Speaking to the woman who is in charge of their lift ticket window was an enlightening experience for me. When customers come up to buy a lift ticket, she has been asking them where they live – to get an idea of the geographic region that Pine Knob reaches. To her surprise, 60 percent **weren't** from the Metro Detroit area. They came primarily from Ohio and Canada. Since Pine Knob does not advertise to these areas, we know that people came because Michigan looks like such a great place to visit through the Pure Michigan campaign. I'm making this point because I want you to know that it's not just our large resorts or our tourist regions that benefit from this campaign. It's places like Pine Knob in Metro Detroit and the gas stations and restaurants nearby as well.

In addition, the jobs that the travel industry creates can't be outsourced. It would be pretty hard to move one of our ski hills to another country, or outsource the ski lift attendants that go with them! Those jobs will always stay right here.

We live in a state that turns cold for three months each year. Let's celebrate this season and bring in additional revenue by showcasing winter sports to our neighboring states. To that end, I ask you to support the Pure Michigan funding package, **with a provision that insures a proportionate amount of funding goes toward winter tourism,** because after all, what is more "Pure Michigan" than our driven snow?

Thank you.